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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NAIROBI 002618

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF
STATE PASS AID
LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SO](#) [KE](#)

SUBJECT: SOMALIA -- CENTER OF GRAVITY NOW IN SOMALIA FOR
TRANSITIONAL FEDERAL INSTITUTIONS

REF: A. NAIROBI 2488

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 2516

Classified By: LISA J. PETERSON, ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR, REASONS 1.
4 (B) AND (D)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (C) Despite Yemeni efforts to mediate between the Transitional Federal President and the Speaker of the Assembly, talks in Sanaa on key issues separating two main camps in the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFIs) appear to have ended in acrimony. Prime Minister Ghedi has declared his government to be based in Jowhar -- and the controlling warlord has said nothing to disabuse the PM of this idea. The Somali rumor mill is rife with dooms-day scenarios in which President Yusuf takes military action in order to wrest from the hands of his opponents the presidency -- which no one is trying to take from him. Members of the Assembly are streaming into Somalia, with some dispersing to their home regions -- either heeding the President's call to bring reconciliation to the district level, or avoiding what they might see as an unhealthy security situation in the capital -- and others going to Mogadishu to join the Speaker and other colleagues in a session of the Parliament, scheduled for June 25. The idea that the President, with Ethiopian help, is setting in place the final pieces of a military strategy has taken on such currency as to be the driving force behind the actions of many political and civil society players in Somalia. END SUMMARY.

PRIME MINISTER TO JOWHAR ...

[1](#)2. (SBU) As reported ref (B), President Yusuf departed Nairobi June 13 for the G-77 meeting in Qatar. The next Somali notable to leave the Kenyan capital was Prime Minister Ali Mohammed Ghedi, who boarded a plane June 18 bound for his family home town of Jowhar, currently under control of his relative, the Hawiye Abgal-clan warlord Muhammad Omar Habeb (AKA "Muhammad Dheere"). Despite Dheere's announcement June 14 that Jowhar was unsuitable as a temporary seat for the TFG, press reports were soon quoting the Prime Minister that he has led his government to its new home. Reuters quoted Ghedi June 21 as saying "My government has finally moved to Somalia. Jowhar is our base until Mogadishu is pacified."

[1](#)3. (SBU) The PM got additional press coverage when he laid a foundation stone in an expansion project at Jowhar airstrip -- an act of irony, given the fact that President Yusuf had stressed the inadequacy of the airstrip there when he declined to land there in the evening of June 13. Reports of Ghedi's speech at the occasion said the PM had stressed that Jowhar airport needed a quick upgrade so that international leaders and foreign delegates, whom he and President Yusuf would be hosting soon, could use it. This was apparently in keeping with the PM's conversation, prior to his departure from Nairobi, with UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) Ambassador Francois Fall. Amb. Fall told Somalia Watcher that, at a meeting June 16, the PM had informed him that henceforth, all gatherings of the consultative body the two men co-chair, the Somalia Coordination and Monitoring Committee (CMC), would have to be held in Somalia, and that the international community members of the committee should prepare for such a meeting in July, to be convened in Jowhar.

PRESIDENT, SPEAKER TO SANAA

[1](#)4. (SBU) Meanwhile, President Yusuf traveled O/A June 20 from Doha to the Yemeni capital Sanaa. Transitional Federal Assembly Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Aden joined him there for talks mediated by the good offices of Yemeni President Ali Abdallah Saleh. The press and the Nairobi rumor mill reported that four issues were on the table between the two men: A series of appointments and sackings of Ministers and

local government officials by decree of the Prime Minister; several motions on which sub-quorum gatherings of MPs had debated and voted since the last ill-fated parliamentary plenary on March 17; the seat of the government in Somalia; and the make-up of any future peace support mission that might deploy to assist the TFG with security. Despite rumors on June 22 of a preliminary agreement, every indication of an energetic effort on the part of the Yemeni hosts, and at least one face-to-face discussion between the Somali President and Speaker, all indications on June 23 were that the talks had broken down in acrimony. Somalia Watcher received calls late that night stating that the Speaker and his delegation were en route to Mogadishu, where a session of Parliament would be convened June 25, while the President was rumored to be departing Sanaa June 24 for Jowhar, with expected stops en route in Bosasso and Garoowe in his home region of Puntland.

TAKING HIS PRESIDENCY BY FORCE?

15. (C) However, the more enthusiastic of the rumor mongers have Yusuf landing in Bosasso, and heading for Garoowe, but from there crossing Ethiopian territory to the town Ferfer, roughly due north of Beletweyne, on the Ethiopia-Somali border. He would link up there with some 800 Puntland militiamen that have reportedly been posted in the town since early June. With a force in hand, Yusuf would then head for Huddur, in Bakol District, link up with Rahanweyne militias there, and execute the military campaign to wrest his (uncontested) presidency from the Hawiye warlords squatting on Mogadishu (see reftel B for discussion of this supposed strategy).

16. (C) Facts on the ground, and reports from various neighboring countries, might be interpreted as supporting these rumors. For example, the UN's security chief for Somalia informed the international community members of the CMC (I-CMC members) that the Puntland militiamen referred to para 5 had in fact been pre-positioned in Ferfer -- as a presidential security force. According to the UN, the force in Ferfer was to have been divided, with roughly half to have transferred to Jowhar for the President's close protection. Agence France Press (AFP) reports indicated that "well armed forces from Puntland (...) arrived in Jowhar" on June 20, "(...) armed with over 10 'technicals'". AFP quoted Mohammed Dheere as confirming that the force would guard the President's and ministers' residences.

17. (C) While personal protection in Jowhar seems a reasonable precaution for the President to take, the UN's information on the disposition of the other half of the Ferfer force -- that it is to move to Bakol District to join with the Rahanweyne militias -- is less easy to explain. Jowhar warlord Dheere is also quoted in the press as saying that part of the Puntlander force would depart for Huddur to reinforce an already existing force there. Rumor buffs point to increasing press reports from Ethiopia, claiming that rebels of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) were gathering in Galguduud District in Somalia, in preparation for attacks on Ethiopian troops. Such reports have been used as justification for Ethiopian military action in their Ogaden region -- and cross-border, into Somalia. Taken together, these elements -- Puntland militias combining with Yusuf-loyal Rahanweyne forces, and a pretext for Ethiopian intervention in protection of valid security interests -- give plenty of fodder for the theorists that say Yusuf plans to mount a military operation with Ethiopian assistance to take control of Mogadishu -- in essence, mounting a coup d'etat against himself.

PARLIAMENT SCATTERED ALL OVER

18. (SBU) The UNDP Chief in Nairobi, Max Gaylard, briefed I-CMC members on June 21 on his agency's attempts to assist the return of ministers/MPs and former Somali National Reconciliation Conference (SNRC) delegates from Nairobi to Somalia. He characterized the operation as "relatively smooth for the delegates, but problematic -- chaos, actually -- for the MPs." Gaylard reported that Prime Minister Ghedi had on June 16 submitted a list of all the MPs remaining in Nairobi, with a prescribed destination in what Ghedi had determined to be the home district in Somalia for each MP. MPs, however, presented themselves to the UNDP offices, refusing to abide by the PM's prescriptions, and threatening harm to UNDP staff if they were forced to go anywhere not of their own choosing, with most of these stating they intended to join the Speaker of the Assembly and other ministers/MPs in Mogadishu. Gaylard stated that the PM backed down on June 18 on the specifics of his list "as he climbed the stairs of his aircraft." Since then, UNDP has been canvassing the MPs to determine their preferred destination in Somalia, with flights having already begun that morning. Press reports

filed from Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta International Airport told of a delegation of 22 MPs en route to the Puntland towns of Garoowe and Gaalkacyo. Gaylard committed to I-CMC members that he would provide a complete list of MPs transported into Somalia, and their destinations, as soon as the operation is completed.

PUBLIC STATEMENT WELL RECEIVED

9. (C) Somali Watcher on June 22 met with former Somali Army Colonel and current senior Al-Islah figure Mr. Abdirahman Moalim Abdullahi (AKA "Badiyow"), at his request, to discuss the current situation in Mogadishu and Somalia. Badiyow, a Somali Canadian who is currently resident in Montreal, had spent the previous 45 days in Mogadishu, and claimed to have been deeply involved in the civil society efforts to change the security equation in the capital. Badiyow enthused over the June 21 public statement issued in Nairobi, saying it was constructive to see a clear endorsement of the legitimizing power of the Somali people. (Badiyow was also extremely complimentary of the Secretary's recent speeches in the Middle East, expressing appreciation for language that he characterized as an "apology for an historical bias toward dictator-enforced stability, and away from popularly-based democracy.")

FUNDING NEEDED -- BUT THERE ARE
NO SAFE DELIVERY MECHANISMS

10. (C) Badiyow lamented that there was a real problem with the provision of financial assistance to any part of the Somali experiment -- whether that would be in support of Mogadishu's civil society, or President Yusuf's district-level reconciliation, or the warlord's cantonment of militias. "No matter what the goal would be, or how desperately it is needed, money would only fuel conflict," he opined. He critiqued European Commission funding, on the verge of disbursement through UNDP channels, for district-level reconciliation as the most dangerous effort in the making. "Who will have control of the money in the villages and towns? It will have to be the MPs, but these MPs are not the choice of the people -- the warlords who controlled the outcome of the SNRC selected them. So when these MPs show up with cash in hand, and a potentially hostile population, there will be no reconciliation -- only the buying of protection." Badiyow stressed that, from his point of view, even the efforts of his colleagues in civil society should be left without outside resources, despite the desperate calls for assistance. His logic: That the process of pushing the warlords into peace had drawn its power from the fact that it was entirely home-grown, and that whoever might receive funds from an outside source would be seen as in that source's pocket. "Let civil society keep pushing this forward with our own funds, and those we squeeze from the businessmen." His one exception was the need for infrastructure in the militia cantonment camps, but even here, he acknowledged that funds to improve the situation for the "demobilized" boys would most likely end up in the pockets of the warlords.

COMMENTS:
CENTER OF GRAVITY SHIFTING

11. (C) With the steady stream of Somali TFI members continuing into Somalia during the week of June 18-24, the number of those heading into the country they purport to represent and propose to govern is mounting. Mogadishu appears to be acting as a magnet -- for some MPs, attracting them toward the capital and the Speaker, and for others, especially those originating from Puntland, repelling them toward their home regions.

12. (C) June 25 may prove telling in where the center of gravity has shifted. The Speaker of the Assembly announced on June 12 (reported reftel A) that the next meeting of the Parliament, at its "temporary headquarters in Mogadishu", would convene on that day. He had set forth an agenda without obvious political overtones -- establishing parliamentary committees and electing committee chairmen, approving the annual budget of the government, confirming numerous independent commissions. Should the session go forward, whatever business might be discussed will be less important than the tally of who shows up, in what numbers.

13. (C) We have reported in some detail on the rumors surrounding apparently verifiable movements of militias, on press reports regarding "events" with implications for Somalia's neighbor to the west, and on the apocalyptic scenarios put forth to explain the alignment of various elements that could signal a resumption of outright civil war in Somalia. As noted in reftel B, this is less a reflection

of any credence we give to these rumors, than an indication of the kinds of worries that seem to be uppermost in the minds of Somalis, and upon which they base their plans and actions. Although Al-Islah's Badiyow referred to President Yusuf as "a fine planner, but someone who rarely gets around to implementing his plans," it seems that Somalis of all stripes put such confidence in the many theories of what might be going on in the President's head that he does not need to do much of anything for uncertainty to be the principal condition in Somalia. END COMMENTS.
BELLAMY